

Daisy America's Back

Political Ads on  MediaSmart DVD

How do candidates get your **VOTE?**

KEY IDEA Experience, leadership, honesty, compassion—in politics, a candidate's image is just as important as the issues he or she represents. In this lesson, you'll learn how political campaign advertisers use **persuasive techniques** to influence the way voters perceive candidates.

Background

Selling Candidates In a TV ad, most candidates have 30 seconds or less to “sell” their message and appeal to voters. Just how important is a 30-second commercial? In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson ran one of the most memorable ad campaigns in advertising and political history. The ad “Daisy” aired at a time when the threat of a nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United States was a key issue for voters. It ran only one day, but it had a profound impact. Johnson's opponent, Barry Goldwater, lost the election.

While “Daisy” addressed viewers' deepest fears, President Ronald Reagan's 1984 ad “America's Back,” captured the public's attention in a different way. The ad shows a series of images that highlighted the theme of the campaign: America is “Prouder, Stronger, Better.” By sending an optimistic message, the ad helped viewers associate positive feelings with the Reagan campaign.



Media Literacy: Persuasion in Political Ads

A well-designed ad can define a candidate's beliefs, values, and issues, but it can also present a deliberately distorted or misleading view of a candidate or his or her opponent. By using carefully chosen visuals, sounds, and persuasive techniques, political ads have the potential to sway voters' attitudes about candidates. The following types of political ads are commonly used by candidates, political organizations, and interest groups:

- **Biography ads** emphasize the candidate's personal and professional accomplishments.
- **Vision ads** provide a "vision" of the candidate's policies. These ads are intended to make viewers feel good about the country and the politician.
- **Negative ads** portray a candidate's opponent in an unfavorable light, often distorting the facts by citing false or misleading statements.
- **Scare ads** play on voters' fears and are usually combined with negative ads.

STRATEGIES FOR ANALYZING PERSUASION IN POLITICAL ADS

Visual Elements

- Notice a candidate's **physical appearance** and **body language**. A candidate's physical appearance and behavior are carefully planned to create an impression on a **target audience**. Members of a target audience often share such characteristics as age, gender, ethnicity, economic level, or values. For example, a target audience of voters who prefer a likeable, approachable candidate will respond well to images of one who is dressed casually and shakes hands.
- **Symbols** are images that represent certain ideas or values. An image of the Statue of Liberty, for example, might be used to symbolize freedom.



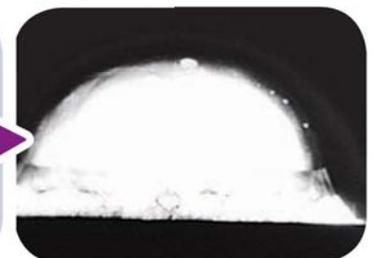
Persuasive Techniques

- **Emotional appeals** create strong feelings such as fear, security, anger, patriotism, optimism, distrust, and loyalty. Ask yourself: What emotions is the ad trying to create?
- **Glittering generalities** are general statements that sound important but are often vague or abstract. Their intended effect is to create a positive feeling about a candidate (for example, "A vote for Evan Smith is a vote for freedom and democracy").
- **"Plain folks" appeals** are attempts to persuade viewers that the candidate understands the average person, because he or she is one.



Sound Elements

- **Music** is used to trigger emotions such as optimism or nostalgia. Upbeat music inspires voters, while jarring or disturbing music gives a sense of mistrust.
- Some **voice-over** narrations can inspire trust or confidence. Other voice-overs can give a sense of unease or mistrust. Ask yourself: How is voice-over used to create a positive or negative image of a candidate?





- Advertisement 1: “Daisy”
- Advertisement 2: “America’s Back”
- Genre: Political Ads



Viewing Guide for Political Ads

As you view the political ads, consider the times in which they were created. Both ads are regarded as classic by today’s standards. “Daisy” capitalizes on voters’ fears of a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. The ad was meant to scare viewers into voting for Johnson. “America’s Back” uses images of peace and prosperity to persuade Americans to re-elect President Reagan.

Quickly review the persuasive techniques that appear on page 667 of this lesson as well as those listed on page 574. To analyze how persuasive techniques are used in political ads, view each ad more than once and answer the following questions.

NOW VIEW

FIRST VIEWING: Comprehension

1. **Summarize** Summarize the message in each ad.
2. **Recall** What symbol appears repeatedly in “America’s Back”?

CLOSE VIEWING: Media Literacy

3. **Identify Type of Ad** How would you categorize each ad—biography ad, vision ad, negative ad, or scare ad? Give reasons.
4. **Identify Target Audience** Who do you think is the target audience of each ad—for example, new voters, retired voters, wealthy voters? Explain.
5. **Analyze Emotional Appeals** In “Daisy,” what emotions do you think the visuals and voice-over are attempting to trigger?
6. **Analyze Persuasive Techniques** Identify the persuasive techniques used in “America’s Back.” How do these techniques help convey the ad’s message?